

APPENDIX A

Malaysian Street Personalities

In few countries of the world do we find so many colourful personalities with such interesting occupants as in Malaysia. For example, the roadside dentist (or perhaps tooth extractor) is still to be seen. His equipment is very simple- a large cloth on which he spreads out the implements of his trade and a substantial collection of loose teeth. If you observe closely you will notice several specimens of canine teeth among the heap of human teeth. People still patronize the roadside dentist. It may be the tension associated with the waiting room of the qualified dentist that causes some to prefer the informal and primitive ways of his unqualified counterpart by the roadside. Also the fees charged are definitely *more competitive!*

The roadside medicine-seller is another well-known Malaysian personality. He displays his wares on a small carpet or rug. His main asset is his ability to talk. There is an uninterrupted flow of impressive language from his lips. He does not stop to breathe nor does he give time to his audience to pause to reflect over what he says. If we are to take his words seriously, then apparently the contents of his bottles are calculated to cure '*all this ills that flash is heir to*'.

Some medicine-sellers make use of vans equipped with loud-speakers to attract crowds. Recorded music is relayed over the loud-speaker and after a while as a group of passers-by collects round the van the music is stopped and the *voice of persuasion* is heard. The medicine-seller would make an excellent election agent for he knows the right methods to employ in order to attract crowds and to hold their attention. Incidentally, the story is told of an Irish medicine-seller who made the mistake of throwing a challenging question to his audience. After extolling the virtues of his medicine he proudly boasted 'Ladies and gentlemen, I have sold this medicines for the last 15 years and I have had no complaints whatsoever. Now what does that prove?' A voice from the back of the crowd replied 'Dead men tell no tales'. The Malaysian medicine-seller is a shrewd man. He does not ask his audience silly questions like that!

Along the five-foot way one sometimes come across Indian and Chinese fortune-tellers. It is surprising what believe in *palmistry* and other modes of foretelling the future. One palmist I know has a collection of *well-thumbed volumes*, which he consults before he speaks. Another uses a bird, which is kept, in a large cage to pick out a small stick on which words and symbols are engraved. The fortune-teller *deciphers* the symbols of his client. More women than men seem to patronized the fortune-tellers. We strongly suspect that the fortune-teller will not worry his clients by predicting troubles. He will probably play safe by painting a very *rosy future* for all who care to consult him.

In all the large towns of Malaysia where there are outstation taxi stations, touts or men who obtain passengers for taxi drivers are to be found. The *tout* greets every passer-by warmly in the tone of 'hail fellow, well met!' He only mentions the names of towns. He looks at every prospective traveler and asks, 'Kuala Lumpur? Malacca? Ipoh?' when he has met a *bona fide* traveler he snatches his bag from him and hurries him off to a waiting taxi. The luggage is carefully deposited in the luggage boot and the passenger is asked to wait for a

while. The taxi does not leave until a full load of four passengers has been collected. The tout is paid a fixed rate for each passenger he gets.

The tout knows every taxi and every taxi driver in his area. He is well informed about road accidents, fines in traffic courts and about the state of supply and demand for passenger transport. When he has nothing better to do he whiles away the time at near-by tea-stalls or exchanges gossip and jokes with drivers, passengers, hawkers and idlers who loiter round taxi stands and bus stations in Malaysia.

The wandering snake-charmer is another colourful personality one may still come across in our country. He is usually a North Indian, who plays the flute and is assisted by a boy who beats the drum. The snake-charmer is full of eloquence and dramatic *gestures*. Occassionally, he may spot an old coat with an incredible number of medals on it. He usually combines a few *sleight-of-hand* tricks with his display of snake-charming. He spreads out his rug in any available open space close to places frequented by people, for example, near bus stands and markets.

Like the medicine pedlar, the snake-charmer has to collect an audience before he begins his programme. He plays a few *catchy tunes* on his flute and allows a couple of snakes to crawl around. After that, some card tricks and sleight-of-hand will follow. He then collects money from the crowd by going around with a hat or a basket, and the programme is resumed. A display of snake-charming forms the *grand finale*. It is fascinating to watch the cobra swaying to the notes from the flute.

Since many social and economic changes are taking place in Malaysia, the day may not be far off when these colourful personalities will only be memories, for they are already slowly vanishing.

Adapted from John Doraisamy (1993, p. 23)

APPENDIX B

The Chinese Girl in Singapore, 1913

The Chinese girl's life in the Straits Settlements though freer and less *irksome* than that of her sisters in China, is not an enviable one. Its monotony is intolerable. She is apparently well contented with her lot for she makes no complaint whatever. So accustomed is she to her surroundings that were she placed in the English girl's shoes, she would feel quite out of her element.

The happiest and merriest period of her life is that spent during her childhood, when no restrain whatever is put upon her actions. She is permitted to associate with boys and *romp* about the house and streets (there being no nursery) to her heart's content, which, accounts for the dirty and *unkempt* appearance she sometimes presents. Her seclusion dates from the time when she arrives at the age of 13 or 4, and everything considered unladylike is forbidden her. The parents here do not look upon their daughters as being altogether worthless... No girl is ever sold into slavery. When unwanted she is usually given away to be adopted into some family and is there treated as a daughter of a house.

As soon as she was 13 or 14, she has to undergo a course of training in cooking and sewing. The two are essential accomplishments to achieve, without which she has no hope of securing a good match. Education is not considered necessary, but her value would be very much enhanced were she able to read and write a little English.

The attire of a Chinese girl... consists of a long dress called *kebayah*, which extends far below her knees, a sarong and a short jacket. Slippers are worn without stockings, and the dress which opens in front, is fastened by means of three brooches or *krosangs* of three different shapes. This costume is an almost exact replica of the Malay woman's, the only difference being made the mode of dressing the hair, into which, in the case of the former, are stuck three hairpins. Some of the girls have adopted the Chinese costume on a modified scale, as being more suitable to their nationality.

The life is indeed lonely and dull... She is never permitted to venture outside the doors of her abode, unless to pay occasional visits to her close relations. When she does go out, it is in conveyances, which are entirely covered up. A female relative acts as her *chaperone*. She lives in a *sphere of her own*, quite out of touch with the society of men.

The Chinese girl is seldom provided with an adequate education, the passing of the third and fourth standard being deemed sufficient. Consequently, she possesses but very vague notions concerning English *etiquette* and customs. Parents regard it as a waste money to educate their daughters, who are supposed to be incapable of maintaining the family in time of need, seeing that, according to Chinese customs, it is indecent and disgraceful for girls to work for their living, which must of necessity entail their going out *incessantly* and thus exposing themselves to the public gaze.

The age at which the Chinese girl is married is 18 or 19, sometimes 2 or 3 years earlier, as is common among the wealthier classes. It is the parents who bring about the *matches*, and make all the arrangements. In most cases the marriage takes place between people who are total strangers to one another. The girl is completely under the control of her parents that her wishes are not consulted at all: in fact, she is entirely ignorant of the proceedings which are being carried out until the matter is quite settled. Even then, she not

informed of the identity, position, age, appearance... etc., of her future husband.

The wedding costume is typically Chinese, and a great deal of jewellery is worn with it, which is of such dreadful weight that no wonder a delicate girl often succumbs in a fainting fit when going through the ceremony of making her *obeisance* to her parents and other people of importance. The life of a newly made wife would be rendered far happier if there were no mother-in-law who makes her lead a wretched existence by behaving tyrannically in the house. The tyranny and unjust treatment of the daughter-in-law is exercised without the least *compunction or mercy*. The poor wife becomes a drudge of the household, and must be ready to wait on her mother-in-law at all hours. Of course there are exceptions but these are very few indeed.

Adapted from John Doraisamy (1993, p. 15)

APPENDIX C

Task Sheet 1

Study the list of words below and define the meanings of the words, as you understand them.

Among the words listed are also eight 'nonsense' words.

- i. Identify the part of speech of the word
- ii. Write out the definition of the words that you know.
- iii. Guess the meanings of the words you are not very sure of
- iv. Circle the words that you have no clue or idea about (try and guess anyway)
- v. Put an asterisk * next to the words that you think are nonsense words.

You have 45 minutes to finish the task. Good-luck!

- | | | |
|-----|-------------|-------|
| 1. | irksome | _____ |
| 2. | enviable | _____ |
| 3. | apparently | _____ |
| 4. | levent | _____ |
| 5. | accustomed | _____ |
| 6. | merriest | _____ |
| 7. | restraint | _____ |
| 8. | romp | _____ |
| 9. | odjure | _____ |
| 10. | flimp | _____ |
| 11. | unkempt | _____ |
| 12. | scant | _____ |
| 13. | enhanced | _____ |
| 14. | attire | _____ |
| 15. | replica | _____ |
| 16. | venture | _____ |
| 17. | abode | _____ |
| 18. | conveyances | _____ |
| 19. | chaperone | _____ |
| 20. | clome | _____ |
| 21. | adequate | _____ |
| 22. | deemed | _____ |

23. vague _____
24. etiquette _____
25. driwel _____
26. carmel _____
27. entail _____
28. incessantly _____
29. gaze _____
30. knap _____
31. consulted _____
32. ignorant _____
33. dreadful _____
34. ragabond _____
35. succumbs _____
36. obeisance _____
37. rendered _____
38. wretched _____
39. tyrannically _____
40. compunction _____
41. drudge _____
42. exceptions _____

APPENDIX D

Task Sheet II

Study the sentences below and give the meaning of the word underlined in each of the sentences. Write the meaning in the best way you can define it on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Life was much more **irksome** in the city than the countryside because the city is polluted and noisy.
2. The super model has an **enviable** reputation among her friends because her life is full of excitement.
3. **Apparently** one of the robbers was an ex-employee of the bank who had been sacked.
4. We felt very much at home with them because we were **accustomed** to their way of life.
5. The **merriest** part of my life was when I lived in Ipoh with my grandparents.
6. There was no **restraint** as to eating or drinking, so we had a great party.
7. As a child I loved to **romp** around the house with my brothers.
8. The house was terribly run down and the grass was **unkempt**. It was a horrible.
9. My chances of getting the scholarship are **scant** because I have not taken part in any extra curricular activities.
10. The value of the houses was **enhanced** with the opening of the new highway.
11. The school **attire** consists of a white blouse and turquoise pinafore.
12. He made a **replica** of Mother Theresa to commemorate her contributions and sacrifices during her life.
13. Visitors are not allowed to **venture** beyond this point.
14. The **abode** of the Eskimos is called an igloo.
15. In the past brides were transported in beautifully decorated **conveyances**.
16. My aunt was my **chaperone** at my first outing.
17. There was an **adequate** supply of food for the flood victims, thanks to generous donations.
18. It was **deemed** unnecessary to educate girls in the past.
19. We had only a **vague** idea about his intentions so we weren't sure what he wanted to do.
20. She coaches employees on the **etiquette** of dressing, eating and meeting people.
21. To see the whole area **entails** going up to the top of the tower.
22. It rained **incessantly** the whole day so I was unable to go out.
23. If you **gaze** at the painting for a while you will notice the changes that take place.
24. He **consulted** his committee before making the decision.
25. Don't ask him for he is as **ignorant** as we are on the matter.
26. Our journey was a **dreadful** one because the car broke down twice and we had to walk 6 miles.
27. She often **succumbs** to fainting due to low blood pressure.
28. During the tea ceremony the couple make **obeisance** to the elderly for their blessing.
29. She had a **wretched** life as a result of poverty and a cruel husband.
30. The villagers revolted against the headman who had behaved **tyrannically** towards them for years.
31. The judge showed no **compunction** towards the man who had murdered 12 children.
32. Life can be a real **drudge** for those who work as production operators.
33. Learning English spelling and pronunciation is difficult because there are too many **exceptions** to the rule.
34. They had to pay an extra RM 50.00 for services **rendered**.

APPENDIX E
Leading Questions

1. Which states made up the Straits Settlements? What do you know about the Chinese lifestyle in these states?
2. What kind of life is considered monotonous?
3. What does this little girl remind you of? What was your childhood like?
4. What is so significant about this age? Are boys treated in the same way?
5. Why train in cooking and sewing?
6. How is it dull and lonely?
7. Do you agree that daughters should not be educated? Why did they consider it a waste of time to educate girls then?
8. What is an arranged marriage?
9. Why is a mother-in-law considered a tyrant?
10. Do you think the Chinese girl had a good life?

APPENDIX F

Reading comprehension test

Answer the following questions based on the passage you have just read. Use your own words as far as possible

1. What part of the wedding ceremony was considered particularly irksome for the bride? [2]
2. Explain in your own words the meaning of the last sentence in the first paragraph: ‘So accustomed is she... out of her element’ [2]
3. Why does the writer think that the happiest period of the Chinese girl’s life was during her childhood? [2]
4. What do you think does the writer meant by “unladylike”? Name 2 examples of what is considered unladylike. [3]
5. What factors do you think attribute to the great changes that have taken place since 1913 in the outlook and life of the Chinese girl? [4]
6. In what ways is life probably different for the modern Chinese girl in Singapore compared to that of her great grandmother’s time (1913)? [6]

Divide your answers under any **three** of the following

- | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| i) freedom | ii) attire | iii) education |
| iv) marriage customs | v) social life | |

7. Replace each of the following words and phrases with suitable equivalents:
(i) irksome (v) entail
(ii) romp (vi) incessantly
(iii) sphere of her own (vii) obeisance
(iv) etiquette (viii) compunction or mercy [4]
8. In about 100 words, summarize the life of a Chinese girl in Singapore in 1913 after puberty. Use your own words as far as possible. [10]

APPENDIX G

Responses to the Reading Comprehension Task

Draft I

1. The most irksome part of the ceremony was the dressing where the bride had to wear a great deal of jewellery that was of such dreadful weight. ✓ 2
2. The sentence means that the Chinese girl was very used to her dull and boring life and that she cannot not adopt to the different life like the English girl's lifestyle. 1
3. This is because when she is a child she can romp around and make friends with anyone she likes. Her life is also very unrestricted. ✓ 2
4. I think "unladylike" means not behaving like a proper lady. ✓

The examples are:

- i. sitting properly
 - ii. speaking softly
- // too brief 1/3

5. The changes in outlook and life of the Chinese girl can be attributed to the society is made today. In the past the girls cannot go in public and cannot choose their own husbands. Also in the past girls cannot wear jeans and T-shirts like they can now. ✓

6. ?

7.

i.	irksome	: troublesome ✓
ii	romp	: run around freely ✓
iii	sphere of her own	: in her own world ✓
iv	etiquette	: a way of behaving in public ?
v	entail	: allow ✓
vi	incessantly	: occurring all the time ✓
vii	obeisance	: showing respect to elders ✓
viii	compunction or mercy	: feeling of sympathy ✓

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8. ?

10

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APPENDIX H

Responses to the Reading Comprehension Task

Draft II

- 1 The most irksome part of the ceremony was the dressing where the bride had to wear a great deal of jewellery that was of such dreadful weight. ✓ 2
- 2 The sentence probably means that the Chinese girl was very used to her kind of life now even if it was with ^{intolerable} ~~monotony~~ ^{monotony}. She cannot adapt or get used to the kind of lifestyle of the English girl, which was very different. 1½
- 3 This is because when she was a child she can romp around the house even in untidy clothes and make friends with anyone she likes. Her life was an unrestricted one. *Good!*
How about her being merry and happy go-lucky? 2
- 4 *yes!* I think "unladylike" refers to the behaviour of a girl in public. It is how the girl carries herself in society. One example of unladylike behaviour would be dressing up. It is unladylike to dress in jeans or pants. Another example is ^{speaking} ~~talk~~ ^{shouting}. It is unladylike to talk very loudly in public or shouting. 2½
- 5 The changes in outlook and life of the Chinese girl can be attributed to ~~the factor of~~ education. Today girls are allowed to be educated even up to the university level. ~~It is because~~ ^{here} parents ~~are~~ ^{are} allowed their girls to study ^{up to such levels} ~~higher~~ ^{has also} society's outlook ~~is~~ ^{is} changed. Another attributing factor is the assimilation of Western culture in our cultures. Our outlook is more modern now. *Good point!* 3½
- 6 Life is ^{it was} different than ~~in~~ the past, if we compare in the past for freedom, the Chinese girl was not allowed to go out unless with a chaperone but the modern girl in Singapore can go to school, parties and even go to work. The modern girl can travel ^{good insight} by bus and car but in the olden ^{days} ~~girls can~~ ^{could} only travel in conveyances. Another aspect is in the attire. ^{here} ~~Last time~~ ^{long ago} the girl was only allowed to wear long kebaya with a sarong. Nowadays the girls wear all types of attire and there is no restriction. ✓
~~For~~ Education-wise in the past the girls were not educated or ^{had} ~~only~~ very little education was offered because it was ^{deemed} ~~seen~~ as not necessary for girls to study since they ^{were} ~~will~~ not get a job. But now many girls and boys go to school and both have the responsibility to earn money for family's future. *Good, comprehensive answer!* 5
7.

i.	irksome	: troublesome ✓
ii	romp	: run around freely ✓
iii	sphere of her own	: in her own world ✓
iv	etiquette	: a way of behaving in public ✓
v	entail	: allow ✓
vi	incessantly	: occurring all the time ✓
vii	obeisance	: showing respect to elders ✓
viii	compunction or mercy	: feeling of sympathy ✓

8. (repetition) After puberty the Chinese girl ^{was} forbidden to leave her house unless ^{with} a chaperone ^{who is an older relative goes with her}. She also ^{could not} wear ^{dress} clothes as she liked. She ^{was} ~~has to~~ wear very traditional and ladylike clothes. She ^{could not} be seen in public and traveled in a conveyance. She ^{could not} choose her marriage partner and her wedding ^{was} planned and arranged by her parents ~~to total strangers~~. All this ^{can} caused her to suffer later especially if her mother-in-law is also a cruel person. The girl must be ready to wait on her at all hours. (80 words)

The passage is about the past so use the PAST TENSE!

6

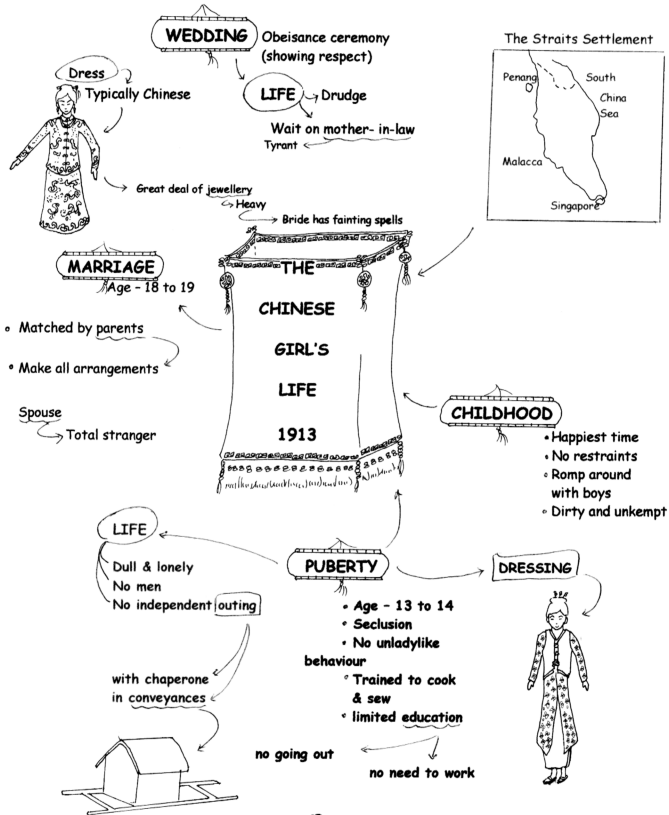
Do not repeat phrases in summaries.

You should not go beyond the number of words stipulated. Try to rephrase in your own words.

26
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APPENDIX I

Semantic Map for "The Chinese girl in Singapore, 1913"



APPENDIX J

Questionnaire

Please read the following questions and respond to them in the best possible way. Tick the boxes provided or write in the spaces provided where applicable.

Name: _____

1. Which aspect of the English 914 paper do you find most interesting?
☐ Listening ☐ Reading comprehension ☐ Speaking ☐ Writing
2. Do you enjoy doing reading comprehension?
☐ Yes ☐ No
3. How do you rate your understanding of reading comprehension?
☐ Very good ☐ Good ☐ Average ☐ Poor
4. Which of the following have led to problems in reading comprehension, if there are any?(You may tick more than one)
☐ Limited vocabulary skills
☐ Lack of practice with open-ended questions
☐ No proper teaching methods
☐ Inability to infer from text
☐ Lack of background knowledge
☐ Poor grammatical skills
☐ Lack of understanding of questions posed
5. What type of reading passage do you find most interesting. Rank (1,2,3,4) in order of preference?

<input type="checkbox"/> Narrative	<input type="checkbox"/> Expository
<input type="checkbox"/> Descriptive	<input type="checkbox"/> Literary extract
6. When reading a text for reading comprehension which of the following do you find intimidating?(You may tick more than one)

<input type="checkbox"/> Difficult words	<input type="checkbox"/> Long passages
<input type="checkbox"/> Long sentences	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited time
<input type="checkbox"/> Figurative language	<input type="checkbox"/> Too many questions
<input type="checkbox"/> Unfamiliar topics	

7. What do you do when you come across a difficult word or phrase?
- ☐ Guess the meaning ☐ Look it up the dictionary
- ☐ Ask a friend ☐ Ask the teacher
- ☐ Ignore it
8. Does an unfamiliar word or phrase impede your understanding of the text?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No
9. When you look up the dictionary for the meaning of a difficult word do you understand the meaning immediately?
- ☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Seldom ☐ Never
10. If you do not understand the meaning of the word after you have checked the word in the dictionary which of the following would you do?
- ☐ Consult another dictionary ☐ Look up a thesaurus
- ☐ Discuss with a friend ☐ Ask the teacher
11. Can you answer the comprehension questions even if you cannot understand the passage?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No
12. What do you do if you are unable to answer the comprehension question?
- ☐ Leave out the question
- ☐ Skip the question and come back to attempt later
- ☐ Guess the answer
13. Do you think if you can understand the passage well you can answer all the questions?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No
14. Which types of the question do you find most challenging?
- ☐ Meanings of vocabulary items ☐ Indirect questions
- ☐ Explanation of phrases ☐ Inferential questions
- ☐ Direct questions ☐ Summary question

15. Which of the following do you FIRST do before answering Reading comprehension questions?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skim through the passage quickly | <input type="checkbox"/> Read the questions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read through the passage very carefully once | <input type="checkbox"/> Read the passage several times |

16. When answering Reading Comprehension questions, which of the following do you normally, do? (You may tick more than one).

- ☐ Read the questions several times
- ☐ Underline key words in the questions
- ☐ Look for similar words in the question and the text
- ☐ Locate the answer approximately and read the line several times to verify the answer.
- ☐ Answer the easier questions first

17. When writing out the answer which do you most frequently do?

- ☐ Write the answer using the same words as in the text
- ☐ Interpret and use my own words as far as possible
- ☐ Reflect on whatever I have learnt or read that has some similarity prior to this, and elaborate with this extra knowledge.

18. Do you think leading questions help to guide your understanding of the text better?

- ☐ Definitely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not at all

19. Do the leading questions help to activate your prior knowledge for better comprehension?

- ☐ Definitely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not at all

20. In your opinion which of the following is the most effective or helpful strategy to help you for better understanding of a reading comprehension task?

- ☐ Provide a vocabulary list
- ☐ Give short explanatory notes
- ☐ Using leading questions to guide
- ☐ Activating background information
- ☐ Providing notes in the form of semantic mapping.

Others.(Please specify) _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

APPENDIX K
Structured Interview

A. Background

1. Do you speak English at home?
2. When did you learn English formally? Did you have any knowledge before starting school?
3. What language do you usually use when speaking to
 - i. Family members
 - ~~ii.~~ Friends
 - iii. Teachers
 - iv. Other people?
4. When do you use English most?

B. Opinion about role of English.

1. Do you consider English an important language?
2. Do you enjoy learning English? What aspects?
3. What do you suggest to do to improve the learning of English?

C. Learning Strategies

1. What do you usually do when you come across a difficult word? If there is no dictionary?
2. Do you understand the reading passages that have been given to you for RC?
3. What is your biggest problem learning English?
4. How can you or what have you done to overcome this problem?
5. What strategies do you find can help you link ideas in passage?
6. Does a good background knowledge about a topic to be discussed help you?
7. Do you like group discussions? Why?
8. Do you mind discussing work with members who are better than you in English? Why?

D. Teaching strategies

1. Do you think the methods used in teaching by me are effective? Which do you think is most effective?
2. Is there any problem you have in the way I teach?
3. What do you find about my teaching that is most helpful?/ Least effective?
4. How do you think teaching can be improved?

APPENDIX L

Interview with S1

Background

1. Yes. We speak English most of the time at home and I also use it with my friends.
2. I learnt the language right from kindergarten.
3. I use English most of the time.
4. -----(not applicable)

Opinion about role of English

1. Yes, it is an important language. It is the international language and most educational materials are in English. Nearly everyone speaks the language around the world. For me English is like a window that opens the whole world.
2. Yes, I enjoy learning the language. What aspects.... Well I like the reading passages, the discussions in the class, I like the things that I learn and there is a lot of new things to learn. It actually helps me with my PA too. You know the general knowledge.
3. I think maybe teachers should relax a bit. There is so much serious studying and there is no place to even relax. But English can be improved if students read a lot and also by having them practice using it.

Learning Strategies

1. I usually guess the meaning and I actually enjoy this. I like to guess and when my guess is about 90% right I feel good. It's like taking a chance and winning. I must do this more often especially when reading.
2. Yes, I usually can understand the passage on the whole but not everything about them.
3. My biggest problem is my spelling. I don't know how to spell sometimes even simple words like 'their'. I don't know how to improve. I didn't realize it until you started giving us spelling test. That is my biggest problem. Like I know the meanings of the words but sometimes I can't spell them such as the word 'phlegm' or osteoporosis. But now I have learnt these words.
4. I try using the dictionary but then if you can't spell the word you can't even check the dictionary. So now I'm more careful, I try to read and look at the spelling of words I think may give me problem such as the word environment.
5. I can link ideas in the passage usually by looking at the sentence connectors. I also use the mind maps you have thought us to get ideas put in a diagram so that I can see the connections.
6. Of course. If we have heard or read about a certain topic we can remember certain things and these connections make us know more about the topic. Like you usually ask us to read about something we are to discuss such as an essay topic, it is easier to discuss if we find some information before coming to class.
7. Sure. I enjoy discussions. It allows us to think more about our work and group discussions help us understand and share more ideas.
8. I don't mind discussing with anyone in the class. They are all friends.

Teaching Strategies

1. Yes, I think the methods you use are good. I like the class discussions and also the presentations that we do. The discussions and group work are the most effective.

2. Well..... not really, except when you use bombastic words which I don't understand. Oh yes, the other problem is when you sometimes expect us to know a lot more than we do and when we realize how little we know such as the time you ask us about the challenges of the Vision 2020, we feel inadequate.
3. I think your sample essays and the notes that you have given in the mind maps are very useful especially for writing the essays.
4. Teachers should be more jovial and less serious. Teachers should also guide students on study skills.

APPENDIX M

Interview with S2

Background

- 1 Yes. Although my parents and my grandparents spoke Tamil all the time, my brothers and sisters spoke in English. I am the youngest in my family.
- 2 I learnt English formally in kindergarten and school. I have been reading English books and speaking English since young.
- 3 I speak in some English and Tamil to my parents. With my siblings I use English and I use mostly English and Bahasa with my friends and teachers. I am of course careful to use only English in the English class.
- 4 I use English while surfing or chatting on the internet.

Opinion of role of English

- 1 Yes, definitely. English is widely used all over the world. Being an international language, I know that I will be understood in any part of the world. It is the language of information and technology.
- 2 I enjoy learning English, especially reading and listening. I am a bit wary about my writing skills, because I'm not consistent when it comes to quality of my essays.
- 3 English should be made interesting. There should a variety of activities and topics taught should be very interesting. Students should read more widely to help strengthen their vocabulary and improve their knowledge.

Learning Strategies

- 1 I usually consult the dictionary or ask my friends. Oh! Then I will look at the words around the word in the sentence and this usually helps me get an idea what the word means.
- 2 I usually do, but sometimes when passages are difficult, like the one you gave on Britain and food shortage it is difficult and needs more attention. But I like the passage on the Chinese girl. I asked my grandmother about her past life and I learnt a lot from her. I am glad you gave me a chance to discuss that topic with my grandma.
- 3 My biggest problem is using my own words to answer comprehension questions and the summary [paraphrasing]. I tend to use word for word from the passage. I also have difficulty giving the exact meaning of words for vocabulary exercises. I know the meaning but I cannot give the definition.
- 4 I have been reading Readers' Digest (I like to try the section on enrich your vocabulary) and the newspapers to improve my vocabulary skills. But I feel that it is still not enough. I will find more materials to read.
- 5 I usually use the sentence connectors in the sentences to link the ideas. For reading comprehension I find the mapping method very helpful because I can see the connections when there are arrows connecting the ideas.
- 6 Yes, it does. I feel a lot more confident when I know the topic.
- 7 Yes. This is because I can get different ideas, which I may not have think [thought] about.
- 8 No, I don't. I feel that I will gain from it. In group work with those better than me I can learn more new words.

Teaching Strategies

- 1 Yes, they are. I like group work the most. I also like the mapping idea. I can draw and I haven't drawn for a long time, but now to map out ideas I can actually draw some of them. I have never done this before. Now I'm able to picture it [visualize] better.
- 2 No, I haven't.
- 3 By using more interesting passages, allowing group work and of course more activities.

APPENDIX N

Interview with S3

Background

- 1 Not really. My parents do not speak English at all. My brothers, sister and I went to a Chinese primary school, so we only use a few words sometimes.
- 2 I started learning English in standard three. I didn't know much English before going to school.
- 3 I speak Cantonese and Mandarin at home. With my friends I usually speak in Mandarin and English. With the teachers I use Bahasa and English.
- 4 I use English mostly during the English class.

Opinion of role of English

1. Yes, it is a very important language for getting knowledge.
2. Yes. I like learning English because I can practise and improve. I also like learning English because I get to learn a lot such as from magazines and the internet to help me improve.
3. To improve English we have to read a lot and do a lot of exercises. We also learn better by speaking in English.

Learning Strategies

- 1 If there is no dictionary I ask my friends. But in the exam I have to look at the word and guess it.
- 2 I cannot understand much after reading only once. But when I read again and can know the meaning of the word from the dictionary I understand better. But I find it difficult to understand the literature type. (extracts from literary texts).
- 3 The biggest problem I have is my pronunciation and also my English is not very good. I usually feel very shy and scared to speak because there are so many words I don't know and I get like....(stuck).[I have very limited vocabulary].
- 4 I try to read a lot. I usually read the main news and I discuss what I read with my brothers and sister. We buy the Star paper everyday. I also try to speak English with my friends. My friends are very helpful and they always help me if I have problems especially.....(classmates who are more proficient)
- 5 I usually find it very hard to link the ideas. I sometimes number them and write them out.
- 6 Yes, the more we know about the topic the more can we understand.
- 7 Yes, because I can get to discuss with my other friends who are better in English. I can learn a lot when we exchange topics.(ideas).
- 8 No. My friends are all helpful.

Teaching strategies

1. Yes. I think I have learnt a lot more these last two years than before. I wish my other English teachers taught me English in such an interesting way as you do, I would have been better in English. The most effective way is the discussions and the group work. You also give us a lot of work to do. This helps me do a lot of practice.
2. I think you talk a little fast. I think I will understand better if you talk a little slowly.
3.(not applicable)
4. Maybe if English teachers talk slower and give students a lot of work to do in groups than only talking. (more activities for group work).

APPENDIX O

Interview with S4

Background

- 1 Yes. All the time.
2 I learnt the language formally from my mum who is a kindergarten teacher. She used to teach me using flash-cards. Yes. Actually I only speak English. I know very little about the Chinese dialects. I was exposed to various materials in English, be it storybooks, songs, movies or encyclopaedias. When I started school, I can safely say that I was far ahead of my peers.
3 [Not applicable]
4 [Not applicable]

Opinion about role of English

- 1 Definitely. English is the gateway to knowledge. We can gain a lot of information in English. It the global language that unites the world.
2 During my younger days I learnt a lot of English especially vocabulary by watching television especially Sesame Street. I enjoyed learning English. In fact it is my favourite subject and I have no problems learning it. I love to read and speak the language. Now English lessons are a breather from the daily struggle of learning numerous facts.
3 To improve in English we must practise as much as possible. "Practice makes perfect" my father says. I believe he is right. But unfortunately we do not have much exposure to it as my parents had so we must read a lot and spend more time listening to good English. I often listen to the CNN news because their pronunciation is good. I also find the thesaurus a good source to gain knowledge on vocabulary. Reading widely is also a very good way of improving both the language and gaining knowledge. I read a lot and I found this helps in my writing and also comprehension of passages sometimes. Unfortunately, I have no time to read now.

Learning Strategies

- 1 I usually guess the meaning and look for clues in the sentence. I also look for the root word.
2 Yes, I do especially after discussions.
3 My problem with English is writing summaries. I just can't write them within the length allowed.
4 I have tried practising and I think I need you to teach us how to write summaries.
5 I personally like the mapping that can link the ideas. When we map out the whole passage by making short notes we can actually understand it better. Also this helps in the writing of the summary.
6 Yes, definitely it can help students to understand the main idea or what you call...[theme]. Yes, theme. For example when we were doing the passage on the Chinese girl I could understand the facts better because I had read stories about life of Chinese girls in the past in Joy Luck Club and The Wild Swans.
7 Yes, I do. Group work allows to exchange ideas and it helps us to work together on problems. Two heads are better than one. [or four].
8 No, I don't. Different people are good at different things so by sharing we can improve.

Teaching Strategies

- 1 Yes, they are effective. I like the activity where you provide us with the extra questions...[leading questions] to discuss the ideas in the passage. This helps because we can think in depth and bring in ideas that we know that are connected to the ideas in the passage. It is a good feeling when we can speak on something we are familiar with.

- 2 No. I enjoy the lessons, especially the jokes and the misprint and misuse of words. That is very enjoyable. I also enjoy the language quizzes, vocabulary games and the puzzles.
- 3 I like the exercises on increasing our vocabulary by looking at the thesaurus. The vocabulary games are also very interesting.
- 4 Teaching can be improved if students are more interested and are more positive. Teachers should be enthusiastic and they should use a variety of activities even if it is just spelling. Teachers must have a good command of the language themselves. There should be a cordial kind of relationship. Teachers who are friendly and willing to help are an asset to any class.

APPENDIX P

Journal entries.

Date : 12 July 1999 (Mon.)

Time : 0825.

Today I've embarked on a new project – writing a journal. I really don't have an idea of what I'm going to write but I will start with what is my purpose for journal writing. :

1. to keep an account of what I think of my teaching. It is like assessing my lessons from now on. I have objectives set for every lesson – are they achieved at the end of the lesson?
2. I'd like to reflect on my teaching. That's a good word! To think back. To really honestly think how much learning has taken place? I've assumed that as long as I've taught I've done my share of work. I must stop and view, do I see any development in my students? Did they learn much?

I'm seated at my table to write this of course. We have just come back from a long assembly, It was Science week last week and a number of prizes were given out. The Bahasa Melayu oral for SPM just started today so we have been placed in the sewing room since the classroom has been utilized for the exam. This room is more conducive, it is big and airy and it is very clean and neat. Students do not have to clean it as they have to every morning in their classroom.

I gave them a reading passage for reading comprehension from Doraisamy's (1993) "Famous Street personalities". As usual I gave out the passage. They are to read it silently. I watch the students. They are seated as below;

Shanti

Lyn

May

Lili

Azmi

Raymond

Kelvin

Hock Leong

Poh Lin Vivian

May Lin

Ruth

Tuck Yong Soon

(Zamri is absent)

Me

Observation

There is an obvious segregation of the sexes. All the girls are on the left and all the boys are on my right.

Shanti – reads, pauses. Marks something – asks Lyn something who brushes her off by shrugging her shoulders. She looks up, smiles and continues.

Lyn – jots something down (can't see from here.)

Azmi and Raymond are laughing over something – these two are always very cheeky. They look up wondering I suppose why I 'm not hanging around and looming over their shoulders. Well guys, this is observation time.

Hock Leong's back is to me but he is also underling something while he points out something to Jeffrey. Kelvin says something and then looks out through the window.

Tuck Yong – is very intently reading with his pen in the hand. Follows the line with the pen, stops, goes back and forth. He has taken out his favourite possession – his dictionary (English- Chinese). Consults it scratches his head writes something and then continues.

Poh Lin and Vivian have finished reading and are amused at some of the descriptions. Got to stop writing, start the lesson.....

0930.

Relections / Observer's comments

The class went on well, or did it? I'm back in my own room (I seem to be more observant as I realize my airconditioned room is quite a comfortable one). How did my class go?

What did I do first? ... Ah ! yes, "Good morning class..... nice warm reply. How was your weekend....? (never waited for an answer really). We are going to read about some famous Malaysian street personalities. (I've actually just summarized the passage). No set induction! I should have done some pre-reading activities.... Would have been more appropriate and make sense. I could have looked at some more probing questions. I must have a look at this aspect.

*Next, I gave out copies of the passage. I asked them to read and make short notes (I 've taught them this skill). While they were reading..... I observed. Then Raymond volunteered to read aloud. (I forgot some of them, Tuck Yong, Hock Leong and Lili had not finished reading on their own. **Why were they so slow? This was a point to query.***

I explained some difficult phrases, asked very short questions, anaphoric and cataphoric ... received several responses.

Azmi read the second paragraph – same procedure.. .this time Vivian mentions that her grandfather used to get his palm read. We stop to discuss this. Why people read about their future. Some very good responses are given which are listed out on the board. How are fortunes read, and why they read. We discuss other methods of reading the future. We move on to horoscope, character analysis, zodiac signs. Then the bell rings.

I set them some tasks. To compare the roadside dentist with the modern dentist.

Insights from this reflection

- 1. The passage chosen was quite readable with a few new and difficult words (12 new words).*
- 2. The passage was Malaysian therefore, it was more familiar.*
- 3. Discussion allows a lot of ideas to come in. Students know quite a lot about fortune telling, even more than me. This was very enriching for me. I had to read more about zodiac signs.*

4. *Reading silently does not really help to activate ideas.*
5. *I must give students a purpose and focus for reading.*
6. *Some of my students had a real problem with vocabulary and I have to do something about this.*

14 July (Wednesday)

11.55 am to 1.05 pm.

English is the last period. Again I didn't realize that students may be tired. I never gave it a thought because most times I am enthusiastic (this was a good point about myself). We are in another class today (5 Cempaka). Another shift. Well, a new place brings in new changes. Today the class was not very clean. I make them clean it up. (I can never teach in a dirty classroom). After ten minutes they settle down. The whole block is much quieter. (The oral exams are going on). The class is still segregated. I will wait for next week. I have some new ideas. Anyway I have to start on my action research. For now just some observations, no action yet. I am going to discuss the comparison between the traditional and the modern dentist.....

Reflections

Students had more knowledge about modern dentist. So I jot down whatever they say on the board.

...clean, scientific, modern, less pain, less traumatic, more hygienic, safer, more private.....

They are not so sure about the road -side dentist. So we read the text and pick out descriptions. I explain some expressions and give more details.

Next , I set them into pairs to discuss which dentist they would prefer and the reasons. I walked around, giving suggestions. All of them chose the modern dentist and they give their responses. They were logical reasons and I liked the one Azmi gave, "I don't think we can find them now"! But of course, that is true. This gave me another idea - to ask them why these personalities were phasing out (the dying breed) for the next class.

Today's class was interesting because we discussed things that students had a good knowledge about the modern dentist. They had all been to one. This was their prior experience that had helped them comprehend the contents of the text. They were also fascinated about the things that roadside dentists did since I had seen such dentist when I was young. I also realized that discussions were interesting especially during the last two periods.

15 July (Thursday)
7.25 am to 8.40 am.

The class was adjourned – a short staff meeting (that became long!)

I am thinking of something interesting that I'm going to do. I am preparing a questionnaire to ask my students. I want to find out:

1. *What were their preferences?*
2. *What were their problems (if any) during reading?*
3. *How I could help them comprehend text better?*
4. *How I could improve my teaching to make it more effective?*
5. *What were their learning strategies?*
6. *Learn something about their background.*

I would like to choose some key informants. I am thinking of four students. I will observe and select them from the 15 students I have.

16 July (Friday)
7.25am. to 8.45 am.

I am very excited about my teaching. I have started preparing the questionnaire. I started looking at details. I even watched to see what the students were doing before I entered the class. (the monitor was giving some instructions before I entered the class breaks – 11 of the students will go off for Bahasa Melayu at the same time). The students settle down after a few minutes.

Today we were going to discuss why some of the street personalities were disappearing and in Kuala Lumpur, they have disappeared all together. I ask them to discuss the possible reasons in pairs (except for one group of three students).

8.55 am

I felt the class did not go on so well. I was doing most of the talking. Although I was asking some probing and relevant questions they did not seem to have the answers. A probable reason was their lack of background knowledge about these personalities. Most of them had never seen one or heard of one. How could I should expect them to know or discuss something they have no idea about. I was trying to impose on them the knowledge I had. I had assumed they could visualize the personalities as I described them. This was not right. I had to give something more concrete. They lacked the prior experience that I had and I had to help them, construct the knowledge. I had some postcards that depicted some of the Malaysian personalities of the past. I gave them four reasons for their non-existence today. These were actually inferred in the text but they could not “read between the lines” that is, infer.

One important lesson I learnt was that I cannot take it for granted that my students should know what I perceive that they should know. I told them to elicit some more information from the elders at home.

19 July (Monday)
8.15 am

I have to complete this text and discuss with the students the reading comprehension questions. I brought LAT's cartoon series to class today to share with them some of the scripts on street personalities and I also brought the repair-man another famous personality in older times. This description was from Adibah Amin's As I was passing. In groups of fours I gave the different articles (photocopied). They read the articles. They seem to enjoy the cartoon strips. They can relate with the character because it is Malaysian in context. We have a discussion and there is a lot of exchange of views and ideas. We also verbally discuss the comprehension questions.

9.30 am.

I realized that students, however old enjoyed cartoons especially those that are of the same culture. Lat's description of the Malaysian life is excellent, as he is able to portray the very essence of life in the kampung and the urban area. Just because my students are older and more matured it does not mean that they can't enjoy and learn from cartoons. The excerpt from Adibah Amin's book was also an excellent source of knowledge. Her descriptions are very light hearted and delightful. We enjoyed the lesson because students learn about the life in the past from other sources than just the teacher describing This is the concept of intertextuality. Using another text with a similar theme to help students comprehend. Lat's drawing were very apt as audio-visual-aids. When I just contemplated over the weekend about how I was to bring this past about Malaysian life, I thought of old pictures and post cards. But I could not really find any suitable materials. I discussed my dilemma with my husband who gave me the idea about Lat's books a collection I have always treasured. Collaboration does help to solve some dilemmas. I must thank him for his excellent idea.

28 July 1999 (Wednesday)
8.45 am.

I wasn't around the last few days (English oral exam). Today I am going to administer my questionnaire. I will explain to them the purpose and instruct them on what to do.

9.00 am.

After explaining to them that the questionnaire was aimed at finding out their preferences, learning strategies and to find out if they have any problem with the learning of English especially for Reading Comprehension. I told them to give their honest answers and not to discuss with their friends.

They are very keen to answer the questions. Everyone is present today. They are all seriously reading the questions carefully, deep concentration and contemplating before ticking. They are such a serious and disciplined lot. Once in a while, they smile probably

amused at the questions and the options. As I walked around just now I noticed that one or two of them do not know the difference between expository and narrative text. I explained to them.

Summary

From the above observations one common theme I found is that my students were very motivated and were very keen to improve themselves.

2 August (Monday)

8.10 am

Today I would start with my research procedure. I have prepared the word list of the most probable words that would cause a problem for some of the students.

I give out the worksheets with the words that are decontextualized and students are required to write down the definitions or meanings on the worksheets. They were not allowed to use the dictionary. They had 40 minutes to complete the task.

8.25 am

As I note down, the students are doing the task. The students are mostly looking through and some write down their answers especially those that they are familiar with. They seemed quite perplexed and surprised when I told them that they cannot use the dictionary because usually I insist they have their dictionaries with them all the time. S3 is itching to consult the dictionary. He is actually looking quite miserable that he can't use his 'prized possession' (English – Chinese dictionary). S1 however is quite relaxed. He is vigorously writing the meanings of quite a number of words. S2 and S4 do not seem very pleased. They are quite dependent on the dictionary too and do not like taking chances at guessing. S4 asks me which word to write down for 'irksome' – troublesome or irritating, when I was walking around. I told to put both.

8.45 am

Most of them have given up. They feel quite depressed about not being able to give the exact meaning. The nonsense words are another hindrance. I tell to make guesses, but they are disciplined not to do that. I then collect the answers.

Summary

My students were very serious about improving themselves

8.55 am

I give them the second set of worksheets with the contextualized words. There were some sighs of relief. They feel so much more comfortable because they can sort of guess the meaning a little better. Some start to discuss and I had to put a stop to this because I wanted to gauge to see their individual responses, how much prior knowledge they had, how they used the contextual clues to arrive at the answers. S3 is still very miserable and utterly disturbed (he shakes his head, frowns a lot, circles and underlines words). S1 is enjoying this (his face lights up and he smiles) The exercise is completed in a much shorter time.

9.30 am.

The second exercise was done faster than the first, but this could be because they have tried giving the meanings earlier and also because the words have become more familiar in the context form. The weaker ones were utterly lost for they had no clue whatsoever about the meanings of some of the words. The class was silent, everyone was trying to think hard. The nonsense words were also troubling them. Even the students of higher proficiency were not happy doing such an exercise probably because it makes them feel inadequate. There was certainly a less tensed atmosphere with the second task. Most of their faces were brighter and they seemed more relaxed. They could complete the task faster.

This shows that unfamiliar vocabulary in a decontextualized situation can be an arduous task. Students can use the context to help them get at the meaning of words and phrases.

Summary

Most of the students had realized that using the contextual clues can help them to understand meanings of words.

19 August (Thursday)

11.20 am

I borrowed an extra period from Ku to do the comprehension passage.

After two weeks of absenteeism (I had gone to Japan for a Summer workshop) I am giving them the text on 'The Chinese Girl in Singapore, 1913'. I had wanted the lapse of these two weeks so that I can allow them to activate their prior knowledge on the words later. It has been two weeks since I had given them the vocabulary exercise. I give out the reading text to be read and discussed in their groups.

S1 volunteers to read the text. He reads it quite well. He pauses at the right places. After he has finished reading they look at the comprehension questions. (Some of them realize that they have read the words earlier after S4 asks me, "Haven't we done this exercise before?" They then decide to do question number 7 first. They discuss the meanings and the definitions. They now rely on their prior experience with these words. Together they are able to write down the definitions. Even S3 is able to chip in the definition. (I have a feeling he had consulted his Chinese dictionary after the exercise the last time, for he was very sure about some of the words). S2 volunteers to write the meanings of the words. (She has a neat handwriting). S2 is usually more quiet. The other three dominate the discussion. They look at the leading questions I give them on the board. They discuss the answers. S3 is quiet now. He asks one or two questions and S1 answers them. They manage to answer questions 1 to 5 and question 7. They leave out questions 6 and 8.

1.25 pm.

The students are able to work well in their groups. What I notice about my students is their cooperation. They are always willing to help each other. They are willing to work together as group. Even the higher proficiency students are patient enough and give a chance to S3 to speak and there is a lot of peer collaboration. They could answer the question on vocabulary easily because they had prior knowledge and also it was a direct question. I had tried to activate their prior knowledge with the leading questions and although they discussed them

and there was a lot of straying away from the topic. They sometimes get carried away and digress from the topic. They need to focus their discussion.

Summary

They can work well in the group. Leading questions give them a lot of scope for discussion.

20 August 1999 (Friday)

7.30 am

I had decided to intervene today. The text is read aloud by the teacher. Short leading questions are asked again and some of the students volunteer answers which are recorded on the 'mahjong paper' using colored markers. A semantic map is drawn for each of the paragraph. I demonstrate how this is done. Students are given blank papers so that they can draw out and fill in the details in their groups. I also show them how to link up the main ideas and the supporting details using arrows and lines. As they fill in the details I walk around and help them. As they filled in the details I could see that the correct details were written down. They were able to discuss the details and their discussion was more focussed. There were more ideas coming out of the discussion. They could compare contrast life as a child and after puberty in the compare and contrast chart on the map. They filled in all the details under the different headings. They were very responsive and enthusiastic about filling in the details. The whole map was then put together after the whole text was read. I then showed them the completed semantic map I had drawn on the transparency. They then answered the comprehension question.

10.10am

After I started putting down the ideas in the first paragraph in a semantic map students did the same for the other paragraphs. As a guideline I gave them the main ideas for them to fill. They also answered the leading questions to get the ideas. They had to find supporting details in the text and activate their prior knowledge to discuss the relevant details such as the dressing of young ladies and what were "kronsongs". Their discussion and prior knowledge helped them to get the details and to help them comprehend the text better. With the completed semantic map students could answer comprehension questions more elaborately and accurately. They could answer the summary question (question 8) easily. Their ability to complete the semantic map gave them a sense of achievement and accomplishment.